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HOUSE BILL 2363

By Curtiss

AN ACT to designate a certain segment of State Route 101 in Cumberland County as the "Justice Charles O'Brien and Senator Anna Belle Clement O'Brien Highway."

WHEREAS, from time to time, this General Assembly has acknowledged the need to name public byways in honor of those outstanding persons whose incomparable achievements have greatly benefited this great state and its citizenry; and

WHEREAS, retired State Supreme Court Justice Charles O'Brien and his lovely wife, former Senator Anna Belle Clement O'Brien, are two such people whose lives of principle and commitment will long be remembered by the people of Tennessee they have so capably served through the years; and

WHEREAS, "Miss Anna Belle," as she is affectionately known, comes from the most distinguished family in Tennessee Democratic history, the Clement family, which has produced statesmen and stateswomen who have served Tennessee in every level of government; and

WHEREAS, Senator O'Brien first made her mark on the Tennessee political scene as a campaign operative when her brother, Frank G. Clement, was elected Governor in 1952; and

WHEREAS, she began her public service career in 1955 as an assistant to future Governor Buford Ellington, who was then serving as commissioner of the department of agriculture under Governor Clement; and

WHEREAS, upon Buford Ellington's election to the office of governor Miss Anna Belle served as his executive assistant, and upon the re-election of Frank Clement she was her brother's first appointment as his administrative assistant, making her the first female chief of staff to the Governor in Tennessee history; and

WHEREAS, alongside her brother, Anna Belle Clement O'Brien played an integral role in the Clement Administration, whose accomplishments included free textbooks for Tennessee's school children, health care for the poor, the creation of programs for our youth, the humane treatment and care of the mentally ill, and equality for all people; and

WHEREAS, with a desire to return to public service, Anna Belle ran for and won election to the Tennessee House of Representatives in 1974 on a platform of education, rural roads, mental health care and helping the handicapped; and

WHEREAS, in 1976, she won election to the Tennessee State Senate as only the second woman in state history to win a senate seat; and

WHEREAS, the Senate Democratic Caucus turned to her in 1982 when seeking a worthy opponent to the incumbent Governor, and although unsuccessful in a hard-fought election, Miss Anna Belle blazed the trail for many women in Tennessee to run for higher office; and

WHEREAS, while running for Governor she simultaneously chaired the Tennessee Comprehensive Education Study, from which came the education reform movement that was otherwise known as the "Better Schools Program"; and

WHEREAS, during her astute service as chair of the Senate Education Committee and the Joint Oversight Committee on Education she helped oversee the most comprehensive and dynamic reform of classroom education in the history of Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, Justice O'Brien received his law degree from the Cumberland University Law School in 1947, and practiced law in Memphis from 1948-67; and

WHEREAS, in 1967 he opened a law office in Crossville, serving the good people there with probity in the practice of law, and was a member of the Tennessee and American Bar Associations; and

WHEREAS, Charles O'Brien was elected to the 83rd General Assembly and re-elected to the 84th General Assembly; as a member of the House of Representatives he served the people of his district with the utmost integrity and distinction, and during his tenure as a member he sponsored and supported legislation to benefit all Tennesseans; and

WHEREAS, he was deservedly elected to the Court of Criminal Appeals in 1970, and reelected to that important position in 1974 and 1982; and

WHEREAS, in 1987, Governor Ned McWherter appointed Charles O'Brien to serve on the Tennessee Supreme Court; he was elected to serve the remainder of an unexpired term in 1988 and re-elected in 1990 to serve an eight year term; and

WHEREAS, widely respected and admired throughout Tennessee's legal community, Justice O'Brien served a remarkable 28 years as a jurist, including his tenure as Chief Justice for the Supreme Court; and

WHEREAS, it is highly appropriate that we honor Justice Charles O'Brien and Senator Anna Belle Clement O'Brien for their unflagging support and dedication to the state of Tennessee and its citizenry; now, therefore,

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary, the following segment of State Route 101 in Cumberland County is hereby designated as the "Justice Charles O'Brien and Senator Anna Belle Clement O'Brien Highway," as a tribute to these outstanding public servants:

Beginning at such route's intersection with State Route 392 southward to the Cumberland County line.

SECTION 2. The Department of Transportation is directed to erect suitable signs or to affix suitable markers designating such highway as the "Justice Charles O'Brien and Senator Anna Belle Clement O'Brien Highway".

SECTION 3. The erection of such directional signs shall be within the guidelines prescribed by the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices.

SECTION 4. This act shall become operative only if the federal highway administrator advises the commissioner of transportation in writing that the provisions of this act shall not render Tennessee in violation of federal laws and regulations and subject to penalties prescribed therein.

SECTION 5. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it.